



# Maricopa County

## News Release

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## Maricopa County Reports 1st West Nile Death

(Phoenix) – A Maricopa County woman in her 70's was confirmed today to have died of West Nile Virus. She is the first person to die from the disease this year, Public Health officials said Today.

The woman whose name was not released, died in a valley hospital, where she had been taken after becoming ill, Public Health spokesperson said.

Maricopa County has reported 20 human cases of West Nile as of June 18<sup>th</sup> 2004. All of those cases have recovered.

### West Nile Virus Overview

The disease first appeared in the United States on the East Coast in 1999. It has traveled West, carried by infected birds and then spread locally by mosquitoes that bite those birds. The mosquitoes can pass the virus to humans and animals, primarily other birds and horses.

In humans, the disease can cause flu-like symptoms and swelling of the brain that can be fatal. Most people bitten by an infected mosquito do not become ill.

There are several measures each individual can take to prevent WNV infection:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around the home by removing standing water in potted plants, tires and other containers.
- Repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Avoid outdoor activity before dawn and after dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- When outdoors wear long sleeves and long pants to prevent mosquito bites.
- When outdoors wear a mosquito repellant containing DEET.
- Report dead birds to local authorities.

More information on mosquito reduction and avoidance, and dead bird reporting can be found at: <http://www.maricopa.gov/envsvc/water/vector/backyard.asp> or by calling (602) 506-6616.

Maricopa County Department of Public Health and Maricopa County Environmental Services Department will continue working to protect the community with an enhanced surveillance program including sampling and testing of mosquitoes and dead birds, and evaluation of equine neurological illnesses and human cases of meningitis and encephalitis.

WNV was first seen in North America in 1999 in New York, and the virus has since spread rapidly westward across the country. So far this year, WNV has been identified in 10 states. Last year, WNV was identified in 46 states and the District of Columbia. It caused 9,100 human illnesses and 218 human deaths.

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite on an infected mosquito, however less than 1 percent of all mosquitoes are infected. Approximately 20 percent of people infected with West Nile Virus will feel symptoms. Most people who experience symptoms will have:

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back.

A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis and even death. Persons over the age of 50 are generally at a higher risk for severe symptoms.

More information can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm> or by calling 888-246-2675 (English), 888-246-2875 (Spanish), 866-874-2646 (TTY).

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